

AMENDED IN ASSEMBLY JULY 8, 2003

AMENDED IN ASSEMBLY JUNE 23, 2003

SENATE BILL

No. 812

Introduced by Senator Vincent

(Coauthors: Assembly Members Calderon, Canciamilla, Chavez, Cohn, Frommer, Harman, Jerome Horton, Levine, Longville, Liu, Maddox, McCarthy, Negrete McLeod, Nunez, Oropeza, Reyes, Ridley-Thomas, Samuelian, Strickland, Wesson, Wiggins, and Yee)

February 21, 2003

An act to add Section 6719 to, and to repeal Section 6718 of, the Government Code, and to repeal Section 1 of Chapter 155 of the Statutes of 2002, relating to Juneteenth National Freedom Day.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

SB 812, as amended, Vincent. Juneteenth National Freedom Day.

Existing law requires the Governor to proclaim the 3rd Saturday in June as "Juneteenth National Freedom Day: A day of observance."

This bill would recast this requirement and require the Governor to proclaim the 3rd Saturday in June each year as "Juneteenth National Freedom Day: A day of observance," and would urge all Californians to join in celebrating this day to honor and reflect on the significant roles that African-Americans have played in the history of the United States and how they have enriched society through their steadfast commitment to promoting freedom, brotherhood, and equality.

Vote: majority. Appropriation: no. Fiscal committee: no. State-mandated local program: no.

The people of the State of California do enact as follows:

SECTION 1. The Legislature hereby finds and declares all of the following:

(a) Juneteenth National Freedom Day, also known as “Emancipation Day,” “Emancipation Celebration,” “Freedom Day,” “Jun-Jun,” and “Juneteenth,” was first observed 136 years ago and is the oldest African-American holiday observance in the United States.

(b) Juneteenth National Freedom Day commemorates the strong survival instinct of African-Americans who were first brought to this country as slaves stacked in the bottom of sailing ships in a monthlong journey across the Atlantic Ocean known as the “Middle Passage”.

(c) Events in the history of the United States that led to the start of the Civil War in 1861 focused on regional differences between the North and the South that were based on the economic and social divergence caused by the existence of slavery. In 1862, the first clear signs that the end of slavery was imminent appeared when laws abolishing slavery were adopted in the territories of Oklahoma, Nebraska, Colorado, and New Mexico.

(d) On September 22, 1862, President Lincoln issued the celebrated Emancipation Proclamation, warning the rebellious Confederate States that he would declare their slaves “forever free” if those states did not return to the Union by January 1, 1863. Enforcement of the Emancipation Proclamation occurred only in Confederate States that were under Union Army control.

(e) Prior to the end of the Civil War, on January 31, 1865, Congress passed the Thirteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution, which abolished slavery throughout the United States and its territories. Spontaneous celebration erupted throughout the country when African-Americans learned of their freedom. Juneteenth, or June 19, 1865, is considered the date when the last slaves in America were freed by General Gordon Granger who rode into Galveston, Texas, and issued General Order No. 3, almost two and one-half years after President Lincoln had issued the Emancipation Proclamation.

(f) Observance of Juneteenth National Freedom Day, a reminder of emancipation, spread from Texas to the neighboring States of Louisiana, Arkansas, and Oklahoma, as well as to the

1 States of Alabama, Florida, and California, where many
2 African-American Texans had migrated. Juneteenth National
3 Freedom Day symbolizes freedom, celebrates the abolishment of
4 slavery, and reminds all Americans ~~in our society~~ of the significant
5 contributions of African-Americans to our society.

6 (g) A growing number of American and African-American
7 cultural institutions have sponsored Juneteenth cultural events
8 designed to make all Americans aware of this celebration,
9 including the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of
10 American History in Washington, DC, the Chicago Historical
11 Society, the Black Archives of Mid-America, Inc., in Kansas City,
12 Missouri, the Los Angeles Cultural Center, the Henry Ford
13 Museum and Greenfield Village in Detroit, the Museum of African
14 American Life and Culture in Dallas, Juneteenth America, Inc., of
15 Ontario, California, and the National Juneteenth Observance
16 Foundation. Juneteenth celebrations are a tribute to those
17 African-Americans who fought so long for freedom and worked
18 so hard to make the dream of equality a reality.

19 SEC. 2. Section 6718 of the Government Code is repealed.

20 SEC. 3. Section 6719 is added to the Government Code, to
21 read:

22 6719. The Governor shall proclaim the third Saturday in June
23 of each year to be known as "Juneteenth National Freedom Day:
24 A day of observance," to urge all Californians in celebrating this
25 day to honor and reflect on the significant roles that
26 African-Americans have played in the history of the United States
27 and how African-Americans have enriched society through their
28 steadfast commitment to promoting freedom, brotherhood, and
29 equality.

30 SEC. 4. Section 1 of Chapter 155 of the Statutes of 2002 is
31 repealed.

